



# Iconoclasm and Reform

Presidential Address

JAMES KIRK, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt.

The Scottish Reformation has been depicted appropriately as characterised by an “essential moderation”, a moderation discernible in that element of continuity in personnel – those clergy of the pre-Reformation church – who undertook service in the reformed church; a moderation discernible, too, in the survival of the ancient structure of benefices as financial and legal entities; and a moderation exemplified in the comparatively few executions for the cause of religion.<sup>1</sup> That is one side of the coin. But, in doctrinal issues, the Reformation marked a decisive break with the immediate past; it took the form of a rebellion achieved in defiance of the wishes of the crown; and in the course of that rebellion, the violence and destructive forces unleashed by a deliberate policy of iconoclasm – smashing and obliterating religious images – proved a crucial ingredient in organising revolutionary change. This Protestant reaction to forms of late medieval piety and devotion, which had focused on the cult of Mary and the saints, was one feature of the reformers’ crusade against what they identified as “idolatry”, and in favour of purifying worship by purging it of all accretions considered to be false or detracting from the honour which God alone deserved.<sup>2</sup>

Iconophobia seems implicit in John Jewel’s account to Peter Martyr in Zürich of the upheavals in Scotland in 1559: with approving enthusiasm – and some exaggeration – the Englishman reported how in Scotland “the theatrical dresses, the

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<sup>1</sup> G. Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge, 1960), 74-75.

<sup>2</sup> See, in general, M. Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts*, i (Oxford, 1988); C.M.N. Eire, *War against the Idols* (Cambridge, 1986); P.M. Crew, *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands, 1544-1569* (Cambridge, 1978); and, for a different perspective, E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven, 1992).

sacrilegious chalices, the idols, the altars are consigned to the flames; not a vestige of the ancient superstition and idolatry is left".<sup>3</sup> Certainly, at the height of the struggle, to the consternation of some and the acclamation of others, abbeys and friaries were sacked, churches pillaged, and their contents – the symbols of Catholic worship – systematically removed. Statues, crucifixes, carvings, altarpieces, bells, pictures, vestments, reliquaries were smashed or burned, and organs and chalices were sold for secular purposes. All this was the prelude to the inauguration of a re-formed church. To conservatives, such action was sacrilegious vandalism on an unprecedented scale. To the image-breakers, the work appeared to fulfil the biblical injunction against worshipping graven images; and, as they – or their leaders – appreciated, removing the idols was tantamount to removing the priests and the authority of Rome. As Kirkcaldy of Grange explained to Henry Percy in July 1559, "the manour of thair proceidyngis in Reformatioun is this: they pull doune all maner of freryes and some abayes, which willyngly resavis not ther reformatioun. As to paroys churchis, they cleyns them of ymages and all other monumentis of ydolatrie, and commandis that no messis be said in them".<sup>4</sup> Iconoclasm, therefore, amounted to more than mere wanton destruction; the image-breakers thought they had a theological justification for their action.

Opposition to the role of religious imagery in worship can hardly be considered novel. The iconoclastic controversy in eight-century Byzantium may have held a fascination for erudite humanist scholars in the sixteenth century, and the possibility cannot be excluded that Hussites and Lollards in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries helped keep the issue alive in the retentive

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<sup>3</sup> *Zürich Letters*, ed. H. Robinson, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1841, 1845), 39-40.

<sup>4</sup> *The Works of John Knox*, ed. D. Laing, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, 1846-64), vi, 34; *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603* [CSPScot.], edd. J. Bain, et al., 13 vols. (Edinburgh, 1898-1969), i, no 480 (for date).

minds of some ordinary people on the eve of the Reformation itself. At any rate, John Knox chose to begin his history of the Reformation in Scotland with an account of the accusations against the Lollards of Kyle in 1494, foremost among which were the claims “that images are not to be had, nor yet to be worshipped” and “that the relics of saints are not to be worshipped”. And earlier that century the flickering episodes of the burning of James Resby at Perth in 1407 for preaching Wycliffe’s doctrine, Quintin Folkhyrde’s correspondence with Bohemia in 1410, and the execution of the Bohemian Paul Crawar at St Andrews in 1433 are tentative reminders of the links with earlier movements for reform at variance with the established church.<sup>5</sup>

The dominant medieval inheritance, however, was one in which the images of saints and relics were cultivated and revered as holy objects, objects linking the finite with the infinite. In the grandure of cathedrals, the splendour of many burgh churches and in the fashionable and often ornate collegiate kirks, images proliferated at every corner as signposts, visual aids, “books for the unlearned”, in a society still markedly pre-literate. In Edinburgh, the collegiate kirk of St Giles had no fewer than 43 altars dedicated to Mary and the saints.<sup>6</sup> In popular religion, images also became a means of communicating with the saints and so establishing contact with God himself; the distinction between the image and what it represented could readily be confused or even effaced; in popular belief, these man-made objects assumed their own personalities, possessed efficacious

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<sup>5</sup> *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland*, ed. W.C. Dickinson, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1949), i, 7ff; T.M.A. Macnab, “Bohemia and the Scottish Lollards”, *ante*, v (1935), 11-21; T.M.A. Macnab, “The Beginnings of Lollardy in Scotland”, *ante*, xi (1953), 254-60.

<sup>6</sup> G. Hay, “The late medieval development of the High Kirk of St Giles, Edinburgh”, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, cvii (1975-76), 242-260, at 255.

powers and might even work miracles.<sup>7</sup> Already a focus for adoration, images received offerings from the faithful, and so attracted a measure of finance which some considered to be misdirected. To Colville of Cleish's wife, when in childbirth, it seemed a wholly appropriate work of conventional piety – though not, it is said, to the laird himself – to present an offering of gold to the Virgin and saints associated with the chapel of Loretto, in the parish of Inveresk, which had the reputation of a pilgrimage centre, visited by James V, where miracles were wrought.<sup>8</sup> Associated with the cult of the saints, whose intercession was endlessly invoked, was the preoccupation with holy relics, venerated by pilgrims who journeyed to recognised shrines in search of healing, or miracles, or of promoting the release of souls from purgatory or gaining other spiritual graces which the saints might bestow as instruments of God's power. Among the more prominent pilgrimage centres by the early sixteenth century were the shrines of St Ninian at Whithorn, St Duthac at Tain, and, of course, of St Andrew in the ecclesiastical capital, where the relics of the apostle were venerated.<sup>9</sup> Other churches, however, might offer different attractions.

Glasgow cathedral alone claimed a remarkable array of images and relics for veneration: an image of our Saviour in gold; images of the twelve apostles in silver; a silver cross, adorned with precious stones and a small piece of wood of the cross of our Saviour; another cross of smaller dimensions, adorned with precious stones; a silver casket, gilt, containing some hairs of the blessed Virgin; in a square silver coffer, part of the scourges of St Kentigern and St Thomas of Canterbury, and part of the hair garment of St Kentigern; in another silver casket, gilded, part of

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<sup>7</sup> R.C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims* (London, 1977); P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago, 1980); B. Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind* (Philadelphia, 1982).

<sup>8</sup> J. Row, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. D. Laing (Edinburgh, 1842), 449.

<sup>9</sup> D. McKay, "The four heid pilgrimages of Scotland", *Innes Review*, xix (1968), 76-77.



St Bartholomew the Apostle; in a silver casket, gilded, a bone of St Ninian; in another silver casket, gilded, part of the girdle of the blessed Virgin Mary; in a crystal case a bone of an unknown saint, and of St Ninian; a small phial of crystal part of the milk of the blessed Virgin Mary, and part of the manger of our Lord; in a small phial a liquor of the colour of saffron which flowed of old from the tomb of St Kentigern; one other silver phial with some bones of St Eugene and St Blaise; in another silver phial part of the tomb of St Catherine the Virgin; one small hide, with part of St Martin's cloak; one precious hide with part of the bones of St Kentigern and St Thomas of Canterbury; four other hides with bones of saints and other relics; a wooden chest with many small relics; two linen bags with the bones of St Kentigern and St Thenew and other saints.<sup>10</sup> All these were the treasures of one cathedral, in a country with thirteen dioceses, and over a thousand kirks and chapels.

Devotion to the saints, of course, did not necessarily imply that devotees always held individual images in the highest esteem. Images which failed to fulfil expectations were sometimes subjected to punishment or degradation.<sup>11</sup> This conceivably may have been the context of a dispute between two inhabitants of the Canongate in 1513 when the one accused the other of demolishing "ane tabernacle and ymage of Our Lady", situated, with an image of St John, in a "gavill and sidewall" of a building, "quhar thai haif stand past memorie of man".<sup>12</sup> At any rate, this kind of activity, which could only have contributed to bringing particular images into disrepute, may also have gone some way towards challenging the demands of conventional faith in the endless variety of intercessors and material objects; but it

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<sup>10</sup> *Registrum Episcopatus Glasguensis*, ed. C. Innes, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1843), ii, no 339; *Inventory of the ornaments, reliques, jewels, vestments, books, etc. belonging to the cathedral church of Glasgow*, ed. J. Dillon (Glasgow, 1831), 2ff.

<sup>11</sup> R.W. Scribner, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London, 1987), 113.

<sup>12</sup> Scottish Record Office [SRO], Edinburgh, CS5/25, fos 126v-127r, Acta Dominorum Concilii. I owe this reference to Professor R.J. Adam.

did not seek a fundamental reconstruction of the religious system which Protestant repudiation of imagery intended to achieve. Yet again, somewhat different motivation is apparent in the action taken by George Ker, a canon of Glasgow cathedral and prebendary of Old Roxburgh, who in his testament in 1523 arranged for "the old images to be burnt at the said altar of the Salutation, three images viz. one larger image of St Salvator, one of the Salutation of Blessed Mary and one of St John the Baptist, and the image of the Blessed Mary to be painted anew in the best way possible and [put] in a place near the said altar".<sup>13</sup> In making provision on his death for rearranging furnishings in his church, Ker upheld existing orthodoxy in the utility of imagery and in the efficacy of prayer to the saints. By contrast, Protestant rejection of this system of salvation was, at heart, a theological objection which led some, in turn, not only to despise such external practices as erroneous distractions from the proper worship of God but to indulge in the destruction of the symbols which sustained the cult.

What looks like an early example of Protestant iconoclasm occurred about 1533 when Walter Stewart, son of Andrew, 1st lord Ochiltree (and brother of Andrew, the 2nd lord, who became an early Protestant), was accused by the archbishop of Glasgow of "casting down an image in the kirk of Aire";<sup>14</sup> Stewart evidently entertained unorthodox ideas, and was obliged to recant unspecified heresies.<sup>15</sup> At that point, too (if indeed it were a separate incident), a statue of the Virgin "situated in the wall" of the friary of the Observant Friars Minor in Ayr was decapitated, and certain parishioners in the area were suspected of reading the English New Testament and heretical works, of asserting Lutheran errors "both in private and public" and of

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<sup>13</sup> *Selkirk Protocol Books, 1511-1547*, edd. T. Maley and W. Elliot (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 9-10.

<sup>14</sup> D. Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, edd. T. Thomson and D. Laing, 8 vols. (Edinburgh, 1842-49), i, 104.

<sup>15</sup> *Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland [RSS]*, edd. M. Livingstone *et al.*, 8 vols. (Edinburgh, 1908-82), ii, nos 2420, 2797.

blaspheming against the Eucharist.<sup>16</sup> Searches were also conducted in two other ports, Perth and Dundee, in 1536 for two individuals “suspectit of the hangeing of the image of Sanct Francis”;<sup>17</sup> and the recurrence of iconoclastic activity alarmed the authorities sufficiently for parliament to enact in 1541 that “nane brek, cast down or ony utherwayis treit irreverendlie nor do ony dishonour to” the images of holy saints who, with the Virgin Mary, were to be worshipped as intercessors.<sup>18</sup>

Such a measure, forming part of a wider programme of enactments to combat heresy, would have been pointless unless ecclesiastical disaffection were perceived to be a problem. Nor was the legislation wholly fruitful in eradicating the sporadic activities of iconoclasts. As governor of the kingdom, the earl of Arran in 1543 publicly supported, for a spell at least, Protestant repudiation of purgatory, the abolition of papal jurisdiction and the suppression of the monasteries.<sup>19</sup> This, in turn, signalled fresh iconoclastic rioting, on a serious scale, in Dundee where the Dominican and Franciscan houses were ransacked: valuables were removed, and “ornaments, vestments, images and candlesticks” were destroyed. No fewer than 190 individuals were charged; an indication that the work of image-breaking was no longer confined to isolated individuals.<sup>20</sup> And the violence gained a momentum of its own. Nearby Arbroath abbey and the parish kirk of St Vigean were sacked;<sup>21</sup> Lindores abbey was

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<sup>16</sup> *St Andrews Formulare, 1514-1546*, edd. G. Donaldson and C. Macrae (Edinburgh, 1942-44), ii, no 367.

<sup>17</sup> *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland [TA]*, edd. T. Dickson, et al., 12 vols. (Edinburgh, 1877-1970), vi, 307.

<sup>18</sup> *The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland [APS]*, edd. T. Thomson and C. Innes, 12 vols. (Edinburgh, 1814-1875), ii, 370-71.

<sup>19</sup> R. Sadler, *Letters and Negotiations* (Edinburgh, 1720), 147-8; cf. *The Hamilton Papers*, ed. J. Bain, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1890-92), i, pp. 497ff.

<sup>20</sup> *Hamilton Papers*, ii, pp. 15, 38, 187, 188; RSS, iv, no 2580; Calderwood, *History*, i, 175-176; *Diurnal of Remarkable Occurrents*, ed. T. Thomson (Edinburgh, 1833), 29; A. Maxwell, *Old Dundee prior to the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1891), 393-95.

<sup>21</sup> *Hamilton Papers*, ii, p. 21; RSS, iii, no 636.



assailed and the monks expelled in 1543;<sup>22</sup> and by 1544, the friars in Montrose and Aberdeen were subjected to iconoclastic attack, and two inhabitants of Aberdeen were found guilty of hanging an image of St Francis.<sup>23</sup>

The subjection of an image to punishment of this sort served a two-fold purpose: it indicated the frustration and anger of former image-believers who felt tricked and betrayed by what they had come to see, or had been taught to see, as a deception; the destruction of the man-made object also demonstrated to a wider public the inability of the image, bereft of miraculous powers, to save itself from the fate to which it was subjected. In Perth, hostility toward images exhibited by several inhabitants of the burgh, some of whom were executed for heresy in 1544, took the form of a disturbance during which an image of St Francis was hanged with a cord, a ram's horns nailed to its head and a cow's rump for its tail.<sup>24</sup> The image, as Bucer had argued, was viewed as a demonic object, to be subjected to derision and abuse.<sup>25</sup>

Four years later, when "threatened with torments" for not revering "that idol" the mass, as he called it, John Knox and his fellow galley slaves reputedly succeeded in evading their obligation to kiss a painted picture of the Virgin, and when later pressed to kiss "a glorious painted Lady", one of the company refused to touch what he considered was an idol, but when it was thrust in his hands, after "advisedly looking about, he cast it in the river, and said, 'Let our Lady now save herself: she is light enough; let her learn to swim'".<sup>26</sup> Knox's pungent observation, at any rate, is reminiscent of Erasmus's cutting comment after iconoclasm had struck Basel in 1529 when he remarked how he

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<sup>22</sup> *Hamilton Papers*, ii, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> SRO, NP2/1, Register of Admissions of Notaries, fo. 104; *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1398-1570*, ed. J. Stuart (Aberdeen, 1844), 206, 211.

<sup>24</sup> Calderwood, *History*, i, 171; *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, ed. J. Pratt, 8 vols. (London, 1870), v, 623-625.

<sup>25</sup> Eire, *War against the Idols*, 90.

<sup>26</sup> Knox, *History*, i, 108.

was “greatly surprised that the images performed no miracle to save themselves”.<sup>27</sup> For Protestants, and no doubt for some bystanders too, images, whether decapitated, obliterated, hanged or drowned were seen to have no intrinsic power to escape punishment by their detractors.

Laymen, however courageous they may have been, were unlikely to resort to the drastic action of destroying images revered within their own communities unless prompted, in first instance, by a reforming preacher. The literate might thumb through subversive literature, even relay their findings as they read aloud to the unlearned, but that scarcely constituted a clarion call for the violent action of the image-breakers. Renegade priests might sow seeds of doubt in minds other than their own, even gain a following for their wayward thoughts. The friar, John Willock, who fled to England for heresy in the mid-1530s where he preached against purgatory, praying to the saints and for the souls of the departed, auricular confession and the use of holy water, came from Ayr, significantly enough, and presumably helped shape the emergence of heterodox opinions within the town. Another Dominican friar, John MacAlpine, who fled south during the 1530s as a convert to Lutheranism, was prior of the Friars Preachers in Perth. A third Dominican, John MacDowell, from Wigtown and formerly from Glasgow, also left for England where he preached against honouring saints and images and was reputed a blasphemer of saints in 1535.<sup>28</sup> Had these friars not harboured similar sentiments at home in Scotland, there would have been no purpose in their flight for heresy.

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<sup>27</sup> Eire, *War against the Idols*, 28.

<sup>28</sup> Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, v, 448; D. Shaw, “John Willock”, *Reformation and Revolution*, ed. D. Shaw (Edinburgh, 1967), 42-69; J. Durkan, “Scottish ‘Evangelicals’ in the Patronage of Thomas Cromwell”, *ante*, xxi (1982), 127-56, at 139-40; *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, edd. J.S. Brewster *et al.*, 22 vols. (London, 1864-1932), ix, 283; J. Durkan, “Some Local Heretics”, *Transactions of the Dumfries and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 3rd ser. xxxvi (1959), 67-72.

English contact also led to the importation of English heresies by Scots: John Borthwick, the heretic of 1540 who favoured Henrician reform, was an articulate layman who repudiated papal pardons, indulgences, the treasury of merit and the cult of the saints as devices of the Devil to wipe out the merits of Christ, the sole means of salvation. Versed as he was in Erasmus, who considered the cult of the saints a deviation from primitive Christianity, Borthwick was also familiar with Swiss reforming thought and presumably even then with Swiss reforming practice where iconoclastic demonstrations had heralded the triumph of the Reformation.<sup>29</sup> To educated Scots with access to the writings of Zwingli, Bullinger and Calvin, the message conveyed could not have been plainer: the Protestant attack on medieval piety centred on the issue of "idolatry" and was unrelenting in the severity of its criticism. In particular, the mass was assailed with unnerving ferocity, as idolatrous, for it seemed to involve the worship of a wafer, and as blasphemous, for it appeared to detract from Christ's single sacrifice.

Bullinger's *De origine erroris*, condemning imagery and the mass, which first appeared in 1528, and which was later read by such Scots as Robert Stewart, bishop of Caithness,<sup>30</sup> Clement Little, the Edinburgh advocate and commissary,<sup>31</sup> and John Spottiswoode, superintendent of Lothian, at the Reformation,<sup>32</sup> presumably had an impact in Scotland, as elsewhere, which Calvin's *Institutes* would have reinforced.<sup>33</sup> Similarly a copy of Zwingli's *De vera et falsa religione* was owned by Patrick Auchinleck, presumably the man who became chaplain to the

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<sup>29</sup> Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, v, 606-21; *Register of the Minister, Elders and Deacons of the Christian Congregation of St Andrews* [RStAKS], ed. D.H. Fleming, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1889-90), i, 89-104.

<sup>30</sup> National Library of Scotland [NLS], Zürich, 1554. I am grateful to Mr J.F. Russell in the NLS for this information.

<sup>31</sup> C.P. Finlayson, *Clement Little and his Library* (Edinburgh, 1980), p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> J. Durkan and A. Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries* (Glasgow, 1961), 145.

<sup>33</sup> *Early Scottish Libraries*, 93, 131, 149; Finlayson, *Clement Little*, p. 33; *The Warrender Papers*, ed. A.I. Cameron, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1931-32), ii, 400, 4093, 410.

Regent Morton.<sup>34</sup> At a more popular level, satirical plays, such as Lindsay's, and the circulation of religious ballads, by John Stewart or the Wedderburn brothers, or Glencairn's rhymes against the hermit of Loretto, spread the essence of the reformers' message beyond the confines of the literate and semi-literate.<sup>35</sup> In direct and homely fashion, the "Gude and Godlie Ballatis" stressed the danger of idolatry which obscured Christ's light and led the world astray; they ridiculed the "false fire of purgatory",<sup>36</sup> and exposed the falacious belief that to be buried in a Franciscan cowl improved one's chances in the afterlife.<sup>37</sup> In "ane carrell contrair idolatrie", the faithful were warned:<sup>38</sup>

We suld beleue in God abufe,  
And in nane vther thing;  
Quha traists in him, he wil thame lufe,  
And grant them thair asking.

Contrair it is to Goddis command,  
To trow that help may cum  
Of Idolis, maid be mennis hand,  
Quhilk ar baith deif and dum.

Quha dois adhome Idolatrie,  
Is contrair the haly writ:  
For stock and stane is Mammontrie,  
Quhilk men may carfe or quhite.

The Apostillis that write the veritie,  
Expreslie do conclude,  
That Idolis suld detestit be,

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<sup>34</sup> NLS, Zürich, ?1530. I am grateful to Mr Russell for this information.

<sup>35</sup> *The Works of Sir David Lindsay of the Mount*, ed. D. Hamer, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1931-36); Calderwood, *History*, i, 135-38; *A Compendious Book of Godly and Spiritual Songs*, ed. A.F. Mitchell (Edinburgh, 1897).

<sup>36</sup> *A Compendious Book*, 186.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.



Ar contrair to Christis blude.

Ze sempill peple, vnperfyte,  
Greit Ignorance may ze tell,  
Of stock and staine has mair delyte,  
Than in to God him sell.

And elsewhere the ballads warned against praying.<sup>39</sup>

To Peter, James, nor Johne,  
Nor zit to Paule, to saif your Saule,  
For power haif thay none.

And the appeal to the disenchanted included criticism that the cult diverted resources from the poor and needy.<sup>40</sup>

Ze begylit vs with zour hudis,  
Schawand zour relykis and zour ruddis,  
To pluk fra vs pure men our guddis,  
Ze schaw vs the heid of Sanct Johne,  
With the arm of Sanct Geill;  
To rottin banis ze gart vs kneill,  
And sanit vs from neck to heill.

The nycht is neir gone.

*Requiem eternam* fast thay patter,  
Befoir the deide, with haly watter,  
The lawit folk trowis the heuin will clatter,  
Thay sing with sic deuotioun.  
Ze say that Saule ze sall gar Sanct,  
Bot and the money war neuer sa scant,  
Ane pennie of zour waige ze will not want.

The nycht is neir gone.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 194-5; cf. 175, 176, 196.

Syne to zow we mon offer,  
 Pundis and penneis furth of our coffer  
 And lay it downe vpon the Aulter  
 For the deide of that one.  
*Anime omnium* ze will say,  
 Syne cast the Corps in the clay;  
 Than haif ze done all that ze may.  
 The night is near gone.

Throughout, the cult was portrayed as a fraud perpetrated on the laity by the clergy as a means of enriching themselves. The theological ammunition which permeated the ballads must also have served to sustain in men's minds the energetic preaching missions during 1544-1545 of George Wishart, another product of the English connection. Responsible for spreading Swiss reforming doctrines, Wishart taught that saints should not be honoured with prayer for the cult lacked scriptural warrant, that purgatory was unbiblical, and that expensive churches were built in vain as God could not be comprehended between a priest's hands, or even in a church or in any one place, though he denied ever saying that churches should be destroyed. Indeed, he undertook to preach in parish churches, in market squares and from a churchyard dyke, but when his followers wanted to employ force to invade Mauchline kirk, which the sheriff of Ayr had secured to protect a valuable altarpiece, Wishart declined to countenance violence and preached instead to a crowd in the open air.<sup>41</sup> Yet, in the burgh of Ayr, some agitators again took to smashing images in 1545, presumably as a practical demonstration of the preacher's teaching on the saints.<sup>42</sup> Even in remoter spots, iconoclastic disturbances erupted: in the chapel of

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<sup>41</sup> Knox, *Works*, i, 125-72; Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, v, 625-36; RSS, iii, no 610.

<sup>42</sup> *Ayr Burgh Accounts, 1534-1624*, ed. G.S. Pryde (Edinburgh, 1937), 97; cf. R. Pitcairn, *Criminal Trials in Scotland*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1833), i, pt. i, 353.

Leny near Callander, an image of St Magdalene was destroyed, and the suspected culprit apprehended in 1547.<sup>43</sup>

After Wishart's execution in 1546, some of his followers resorted to smashing images: one group in Fife took to burning St Salvator's College in St Andrews and to destroying the Dominican and Franciscan churches there;<sup>44</sup> and others in the west attacked churches, religious houses and chapels in the sheriffdoms of Lanark, Renfrew and Ayr by breaking choir stalls and glazed windows, and removing chalices, altars and ornaments of the mass.<sup>45</sup> As religious disaffection spread, there was plainly substance in the privy council's fears, expressed in 1546, that "evill disponit personis will invaid, distroy, cast down, and withhald abbays, abbay places, kirkis, alswele parochie kirkis as utheris religious places, freris of all ordouris, nunreis, chapellis and utheris spirituale mennis houssis, aganis the lawis of God and man".<sup>46</sup> If that were the state of affairs, there was undoubted purpose in the protection sought by Kilwinning abbey in 1553 against "heretics, raiders and sacrilegious men" who had invaded monastic property.<sup>47</sup> Earlier in 1548, the military occupation of south-east Scotland by soldiers representing the more radical Protestant regime of Edward VI enabled the English to give a lead in burning all the images in the parish church of Dundee in 1548.<sup>48</sup> At that point, too, Wishart's disciple, John Knox emerged from obscurity to wage an unrelenting war for the rest of his life on what he believed was the greatest idol of all, the elevated host, that "abominabill idoll maid of bread".<sup>49</sup>

In his first Protestant sermon in 1547, Knox attacked the papacy, purgatory, the mass, pilgrimages and pardons; by 1548,

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<sup>43</sup> *Criminal Trials*, i, pt. i, 335.

<sup>44</sup> *RSS*, iii, nos 2368, 2515

<sup>45</sup> *Criminal Trials*, i, pt. i, 353.

<sup>46</sup> *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland [RPC]*, edd. J.H. Burton *et al.*, 1st ser., 14 vols. (Edinburgh, 1877-1898), i, 28-29.

<sup>47</sup> *Register of the Great Seal of Scotland [RMS]*, edd. J.M. Thomson *et al.*, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1882-1914), v, no 1132.

<sup>48</sup> *CSPScot.*, i, no 142.

<sup>49</sup> Knox, *Works*, iv, 222.

in his summary of Balnaves's confession of faith, he deleted mention of "the glorious Virgin Mary" and denounced idolatry which he identified as "carved images, defended, adorned, and worshipped, contrarie the expresse commandement of God", and also prophanation of the Lord's Supper;<sup>50</sup> after publishing his attack on the mass as idolatry in 1550, Knox in various writings urged the faithful to "avoyd all fellowship with idolatry"<sup>51</sup> by separating themselves from the worship of the established church. He then sought Calvin's advice in 1554 on whether the faithful should obey a magistrate enforcing idolatry. The stern reply was that resistance was unjustifiable; but the letters of introduction which Calvin supplied him to Bullinger in Zürich and Viret in Lausanne provided an opportunity for further counsel which proved more encouraging. Bullinger considered that history taught "we must not obey the king or magistrate when their commands are opposed to God and his lawful worship", and that death was "preferable to the admission of idolatry".<sup>52</sup> In 1554, Knox still maintained that punishment of idolaters lay with the magistrate and not with individuals who must simply avoid the company of idolaters; but four years later he was prepared to argue that "the punishment of idolatre doth not appertaine to kinges only but also to the whole people, yea, to everie membre of the same, according to his possibilitie".<sup>53</sup> The prospect of advancing a revolutionary crusade against idolatry seemed imminent. Besides, the changing political context with Mary Stewart's marriage to the Dauphin and Elizabeth's accession in England meant that the possibility of a confrontation, or even a revolt, by a reforming party against domination by France and Rome at home could not be ruled out.

So far, iconoclasm had taken the form of illegal acts of destruction by individuals (as exemplified at Ayr or Leny); or by select groups (in Perth, Angus, Fife and Ayrshire) determined to

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, iii, 24.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 224-25.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 194; iv, 504.



confront the authorities; or again through a communal protest by larger numbers, as occurred in Dundee where full-scale rioting occurred. All remained localised, apparently largely spontaneous outbursts, unco-ordinated and lacking in national strategy. Yet pressure on the authorities was maintained. In Edinburgh, images of the Holy Trinity, Our Lady and St Francis were smashed in 1556, and two images of St Giles were removed in 1558;<sup>54</sup> in Angus and Fife, further image-breaking erupted after Paul Methven's preaching against idolatry.<sup>55</sup> The next step came with the organization of the lords of the Congregation, and their device of banding together in mutual defence to further their religious aims. This gave the emerging movement a sense of strength, cohesion and direction.

In the first band drawn up at Edinburgh in December 1557 by Argyll and his son, Glencairn, Morton and Erskine of Dun, the signatories declared themselves enemies of all "superstitious abominatioun and idolatrie" and defenders of God's Word and his "faithful ministers"; and thereafter they set forward a programme for reformed worship.<sup>56</sup> Participants in a second band at Perth in May 1559, which drew together the Protestant Congregations of the west country, Fife, Perth, Dundee, Angus, the Mearns and Montrose, resolved with "thair haill poweris to distroy and away put all thingis that dois dishonour to his name, so that God may be trewlie and purelie wirschipped".<sup>57</sup> The Congregation was prepared openly to defy Mary of Guise's government by resorting to wholesale destruction. And all this was achieved in the immediate aftermath of Knox's inflammatory

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<sup>54</sup> *Extracts from the records of the burgh of Edinburgh, 1528-1557*, ed. J.D. Marwick (Edinburgh, 1869), 251-52; *Miscellany of the Wodrow Society*, ed. D. Laing (Edinburgh, 1844), 54; J. Leslie, *History of Scotland*, ed. T. Thomson (Edinburgh, 1830), 266; Knox, *History*, i, 256-60; G. Buchanan, *History of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1799), ii, 231.

<sup>55</sup> R. Lindesay of Pitscottie, *The Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, ed. A.J.G. Mackay, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1899-1911), ii, 137.

<sup>56</sup> Knox, *Works*, i, 273-74. (Dickinson's edition reads "superstitions, abomination and idolatry"; Knox, *History*, i, 136.)

<sup>57</sup> Knox, *Works*, i, 344.

sermon at Perth against idolatry and the “abomination of the mass” which ended in disorder and the purging of St John’s kirk, and sacking of the Charterhouse and the friaries of the Franciscans and Dominicans in the burgh; religious imagery was destroyed, as were the houses of the religious, and the provisions of “men professing poverty”, it was said, were allocated to the poor.<sup>58</sup> Here was one ready way of redistributing the church’s wealth.

As the lords of the Congregation began to direct operations and issue instructions to their followers in the localities, the interiors of parish churches were purged, in readiness for Protestant use; religious houses were systematically despoiled and overthrown; and as Protestants secured control of churches and appointed ministers, often with the magistrate’s support, it became the turn of priests to repent by renouncing their former beliefs in the papacy, purgatory, the mass, the invocation of saints and veneration of images. In doing so a new regime was inaugurated.<sup>59</sup>

Iconoclastic riots, covenants of mutual support for purifying worship by rooting out idolatry, confrontations with the authorities, armed resistance and finally insurrection was the slippery path to Reformation by rebellion. In 1560 a Protestant victory was won. Yet the campaign against idols had only just begun. Books of Discipline, Confessions of Faith, general assemblies and parliaments continued to attach priority to

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<sup>58</sup> Knox, *History*, i, 161-63; *Wodrow Society Miscellany*, 57; Leslie, *History*, 271-72.

<sup>59</sup> Knox, *History*, i, 176, 178, 182, 190-92, 203, 206-7, 314-16; J. Spottiswoode, *History of the Church of Scotland*, edd. M. Napier and M. Russell, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1847-51), i, 372-373; R. Keith, *History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland*, edd. J.P. Lawson and C.J. Lyon, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1844-50), i, p. cxxii; *Extracts from the Council Register of ... Aberdeen, 1398-1570*, 315, 323-24; Pitscottie, *History*, ii, 145-60; *CSP Scot.*, i, no. 469; *RStAKS*, i, 6-18; J.E.A. Dawson, “‘The face of ane perfyt reformed kyrk’: St Andrews and the early Scottish Reformation”, in *Humanism and Reform: the Church in Europe, England and Scotland, 1400-1643*, ed. J. Kirk (Oxford, 1991), 413-35.

obliterating idolatry from men's hearts as well as their lives.<sup>60</sup> During what is sometimes called the "Second Reformation", a later wave of iconophobia swept across the land when another revolutionary regime seized power.<sup>61</sup> But as the Catholic Ninian Winzet appreciated in 1562 when he warned the reformers not to "make a monstrous Idoll of your Maister Calvin",<sup>62</sup> there were idols and idols; one man's devotion (whether to a statue or to a leading reformer) could readily become idolatry in the eyes of another.

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<sup>60</sup> *The First Book of Discipline*, ed. J.K. Cameron (Edinburgh, 1972), 94-95; *The Second Book of Discipline*, ed. J. Kirk (Edinburgh, 1980), 217; *APS*, ii, 529-30, 534, 535; iii, 14, 36, 212; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 502ff; *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh*, ed. R.L. Thomson (Edinburgh, 1970), 175-77; *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. T. Thomson, 3 vols. and appendix vol. (Edinburgh, 1839-45), i, 5, 6, 8-9, 19, 25, 39, 47, 59, 109, 312.

<sup>61</sup> *APS*, v, 351, 646.

<sup>62</sup> Winzet, *Certane tractatis for reformatioun of doctryne and maneris in Scotland*, ed. D. Laing (Edinburgh, 1835), 87.

